



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

REVIEWS.

Report on the Desirability of Establishing an Employment Bureau in the City of New York. By Edward T. Devine, General Secretary of the Charity Organization Society of the City of New York. New York Charities Publication Committee, 1909. pp. 238.

In this report Dr. Devine presents the results of an investigation conducted by him as to the desirability of establishing an employment bureau in the city of New York on the plan of Mr. Jacob H. Schiff's memorandum submitted to the Charity Organization Society.

This memorandum proposed, in brief, the organization in the city of New York of an Employment Bureau "under a board of trustees composed of experienced men, preferentially from the mercantile and industrial classes," the Bureau to be placed under a "manager of great executive ability," with two or three assistants "thoroughly conversant with the classes and their peculiarities which compose New York City's working population," and the work of the Bureau to cover all sections of the United States, but its benefits "to accrue primarily to the unemployed of the city of New York."

In the first thirty-four pages of this report Dr. Devine summarizes the results of his investigation. The remainder of the report consists of a series of thirteen appendices, of which the first is a copy of the letter of inquiry sent to about thirty economists, sociologists, and employers who were believed to be in a position to furnish definite information on points immediately pertinent to the report in hand. Appendix II contains, in detail, the replies from the gentlemen addressed. The remaining appendices (III to XIII) are more extended special reports on particular aspects of the inquiry and other material designed to enable the reader to form independent conclusions as to the desirability of an employment bureau of the character outlined above.

In his summary Dr. Devine remarks that "the most striking fact about the replies to these inquiries is the complete demonstration that they give that there is no definite information on these matters, and that the views of those who have evidently considered them most carefully are apt to be diametrically opposed." In expressing his own views, he says: "The conclusion to which I am forced to come from a painstaking examination of all of the data on this subject available in print, and from correspondence and personal conference with those whom I have

thought most competent to advise on the subject, is that there is a need at all times, and in periods of even slight depression a very urgent need, of an efficient system of bringing together as quickly as possible those who are seeking work and those who are seeking workers. . . . I am inclined to think that such an agency would actually increase to an appreciable extent the effective demand for workers." In a later paragraph he adds, "The proposed Employment Bureau would certainly be one means, and . . . probably the best means, of meeting this great and permanent need by mediating between work and workers in that large number of instances for which no other especially appropriate means of communication has been established."

He then considers the work of the commercial employment agencies, the charitable (free) employment bureaus (of which the more notable were the Cooper Union Labor Bureau, the Employment Bureau of the United Hebrew Charities, and the Employment Bureau of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, each of which has been discontinued), the Division of Information of the Federal Bureau of Immigration, the Labor Bureau of the State Department of Agriculture, want advertisements, the methods of trade union officials in finding employment for members, and the method of leaving the matter of finding employment or workmen to individual responsibility. By none of these agencies does it appear to him that the field has been adequately or systematically covered.

The further regulation of commercial agencies, although admittedly desirable, would not, in Dr. Devine's opinion, "lessen the increasing need for an agency which will be conducted primarily for the good that it will do rather than for the profits that it can earn," nor would the establishment of labor colonies or public relief works be adapted to present needs in New York City.

Dr. Devine's recommendations, while differing in certain respects from the proposition as submitted in Mr. Schiff's memorandum, in all essential features are in harmony therewith.

Three of the appended reports are of somewhat novel character, and are, therefore, especially referred to in this connection. One of these which appears in Appendix VI consists, in part, of the results of an elaborate statistical "Study of Newspaper Advertisements as a Medium for Securing Work and Help," conducted by Mr. H. G. Paine. Appendix VII includes several reports prepared in the Bureau of Social Research of the New York School of Philanthropy under the direction of Dr. R. C. McCrea. Two of these reports by Mr. E. E. Pratt are entitled, respectively, "Trade Unions as Employment Agencies" and "Attitude of Employers toward General Employment Bureau."

In his consideration of free State employment agencies, Dr. Devine says:—

While some of these Bureaus are of course better than others, I regret to report that so far as I can ascertain they are everywhere in politics, and are too perfunctory and inefficient in their methods to become factors in bringing about any real adjustment between work and workers. I have visited one private commercial agency in a western city which has obviously done more work in finding remunerative and permanent, although largely seasonal employment, than all of the Free State Employment Bureaus put together; and it seems actually to have done more free work, *i.e.*, free to employees, than the three branches of the State Employment Bureau in the State in which it is located. It has, moreover, an equipment and system by the side of which the best managed of the State Bureaus makes a sorry showing. Purely for business reasons its statistics are better kept, its information concerning contracts more accurate and reliable, and the interest of its managers and employees in its beneficiaries more in evidence than in the case of the best managed State Bureaus which I had the pleasure to visit. I have no reason to consider that this private agency is greatly superior to others which can be found in New York and elsewhere. The difference is primarily one of efficient administration and of adequacy of compensation for the head of the Bureau. . . . The peculiar relation between organized labor and the State Employment Bureau and the temptation to utilize the Bureau merely to make it appear that the administration of the day is "doing something for labor" are apparently ineradicable obstacles in the way of efficient service. The Municipal Bureaus in Duluth and Seattle appear to be free from the defects of the State Bureaus.

And he adds that "it would be easy to make favorable comment on particular features of certain of the Bureaus, especially those in Massachusetts and Wisconsin."

An opportunity appears to have been afforded in this connection for rendering a real service by an impartial and discriminating judgment upon the work of these offices, which, first established in Ohio in 1890, are now in operation in some sixteen States. But, unfortunately, "it was thought to be desirable to reach a conclusion in time to permit the undertaking of the enterprise [the carrying out of Mr. Schiff's plan] during the present winter [1908-09], if it is decided that it is to be undertaken at all," and that "for this reason the inquiry had to be made in the briefest possible time." The imposition of such restrictions and the obvious obstacles thereby placed in the way of a thorough, painstaking investigation of the subject such as might have been of value, however it may seem to the investigator to have justified the hop-skip-and-jump method of inquiry which was adopted, does not furnish a very adequate basis for comprehensive and unbiassed conclusions; and it unfortunately leaves Dr. Devine's reflections upon the free employment offices, and the certificate of extraordinary efficiency given to one unnamed private agency, open to the suspicion that his conclusions may not have been wholly uninfluenced by the thought that it was incumbent upon him to make out a case which would justify the adoption of Mr. Schiff's plan.

But, if there were no conscious bias on Dr. Devine's part in his sweeping indictment of the State free employment offices, should not the admittedly hasty, and therefore superficial, nature of his investigation have prompted him to exercise caution before sending broadcast, under the auspices of the Sage Foundation, such statements as that, "so far as I can ascertain," these offices are "everywhere in politics"?—a charge that, so far as Massachusetts is concerned, we are confident, is entirely without foundation. Reference is also made to what is alleged to be "the peculiar relation between organized labor" and the State employment bureaus and to the temptation to utilize the bureaus "merely to make it appear that the administration of the day is 'doing something for labor,'" which are said to constitute "apparently ineradicable obstacles in the way of efficient service." Here, again, however true this implied indictment of these offices in other States, it cannot be supported by the slightest evidence as regards the Massachusetts offices. There is no such "ineradicable obstacle in the way of efficient service," so far as the Massachusetts offices are concerned and for the reason that no such obstacle exists to be eradicated. That every effort is made by the administration of these offices to treat all applicants for work with absolute impartiality, and that no discrimination is shown union over non-union applicants or vice-versa, Dr. Devine is scarcely competent to dispute, while it is a matter of record that, of the 10,707 individuals for whom the Boston office secured positions in its first year, not more than 441 were known to be trade unionists.

A remarkable discovery, also, is that of the private commercial agency which has "obviously done more work in finding remunerative and permanent, although largely seasonal employment, than all of the Free State Employment Bureaus put together." How "obviously"? No figures or other data are given in support of this assertion, so that, however accurate it may be, its truth is certainly not obvious. In fact, if Dr. Devine or any one else can compile any reliable statistics showing the amount of work done by the State free employment offices of the country, he will render a most important and interesting service. The present writer confesses to having tried it without success, one reason being that the offices in the various States do not keep their statistical records upon a uniform basis. Dr. Devine himself reflects upon the statistical methods of the free employment offices; but does the fact that their records may not be kept with sufficient regard for accuracy quite justify the sweeping assertion that one private agency in a single city has done "more work in finding remunerative and permanent, although largely seasonal, employment [and, we are moved to parenthetically inquire, is employment which is "largely seasonal" to be regarded as synonymous with that which is permanent?] than all of the Free State

Employment Bureaus put together?" These number in the aggregate the country over some thirty-three offices, one of which alone, that in Boston, we know by records believed to be reliable, procured 14,480 positions in the year ending Nov. 30, 1907; 9,941 in 1908; and 5,437 in the first six months of 1909, and of a character both remunerative and permanent as well as undoubtedly "largely seasonal." We should, in all candor, be grateful to Dr. Devine for some statistics of the private agency to which he alludes, and for information as to the method followed in procuring and tabulating the same, together with such totals showing the aggregate work performed by the State offices as he may have used as a basis for his comparisons. Specifications as to the respects in which "the municipal bureaus in Duluth and Seattle appear to be free from the defects of the State Bureaus" would likewise be most interesting. By producing these data, a real service would be rendered those charged with the responsibility of administering the State offices, some of whom, at least, would welcome practical suggestions, based upon experience, from any quarter, public or private, which would promote increased efficiency both in service and in statistical methods.

Dr. Devine's method of assembling and presenting his material is straightforward and concise, and the reader is enabled thereby readily to grasp the nature of the problem considered. It is all the more to be regretted, therefore, that the facts or opinions upon which the compiler's conclusions are based should have been so hastily assembled, and should not have been more maturely digested before being given to the public.

CHARLES F. GETTEMY.